Give girls a chance:
End child labour

12 June | World Day Against Child Labour
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Women and girls contribute more than half of the labour required to produce the food eaten in developing countries, where agriculture is highly labour-intensive.

Research has proven that educating girls is one of the most effective ways to tackle poverty.
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The United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals (MDG) target of achieving universal primary education and eliminating disparity in education by 2015 also means tackling child labour. The ILO’s Global Plan of Action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016 requires solid partnership and action.

Despite progress made in recent years to reduce child labour, a formidable amount remains to be done. It is clear that the global economic crisis is pushing more families into poverty and threatens to derail positive progress which has been made in extending access to education and tackling child labour. As we celebrate the progress that has been made in the ten years since the international community adopted Convention No 182, the World Day Against Child Labour 2009 will highlight the continuing challenges, with a specific focus on exploitation of girls in child labour.

Every year on 12 June, children and adults around the globe mark the World Day against Child Labour, a day devoted to the goal of creating a world in which all children can grow and learn without the burden of child labour.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the landmark ILO Convention No.182 which addresses the need for action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in the world.

The international community’s efforts to achieve Education For All (EFA) and the progressive elimination of child labour are inextricably linked. On the one hand, education is a key element in the prevention of child labour. Children with no access to quality education have little alternative but to enter the labour market, where they are often forced to work in dangerous conditions. On the other hand, child labour is one of the main obstacles to EFA, since children who are working full time cannot go to school. The achievement of children who combine work and school often suffers and there is a tendency for these children to drop out of school and enter employment.
100 million girls in child labour

Around the world, an estimated 100 million girls are involved in child labour. Many girls do similar types of work as boys, but often also endure additional hardships and face extra risks. Moreover, girls are frequently exposed to some of the worst forms of child labour, often in hidden work situations including in agriculture and domestic work.

This publication will explore some of these issues with a view to raising awareness and providing a call to action on the urgent need to eliminate child labour. Learning resources are also included for classroom use.

Over 200 million children at work

The ILO has estimated that worldwide about 218 million children were child labourers in 2004. These statistics reflect the children who are working in economic activities, but exclude those working in the non-market unpaid jobs, such as domestic work or caregiving.

70 per cent of all working children are involved in agriculture, 22 per cent in services and 9 per cent in industry. The Asia-Pacific region continues to have the largest number of child workers, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

International standards

ILO standards require that countries establish a minimum age of employment, which is generally 15, although developing countries can set the age at 14. They also require that children, including adolescents aged 15-17, are not involved in work designated as a worst form of child labour.

ILO Worst forms of Child Labour Convention, No. 182 (1999) calls for “the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour”. It defines worst forms as all forms of slavery and similar practices; child prostitution and pornography; illicit activities (in particular the production and trafficking of drugs), children in debt bondage or trafficking, children in slavery, forced or compulsory labour, including forced recruitment for use in armed conflict; and work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. Domestic labour is generally included also. C182 complements C 138.

Girls face multiple disadvantages

Because of gender discrimination in the household, the community and, indeed, all levels of society, girls face multiple disadvantages. These vulnerabilities are stronger in rural areas, where poverty, traditions and lack of infrastructure and services prevail, including lack of access to quality education.
In many cultures families place more value on the education of boys than girls. If a family has to make a choice between sending a boy or girl to school, the girl often loses out.

Much discrimination and violence against girls remains invisible, particularly in wartime or post-conflict situations, in areas suffering the HIV/AIDS crisis, in cases where families are migrants or refugees, and in rural areas.

Girls may be forced into early marriage and early pregnancies, a negative experience with devastating consequences for too many.

Girls are also more likely than boys to be victims of trafficking. The extreme exploitation of girls in the worst forms of child labour includes slavery, bonded labour, prostitution and pornography.

Domestic work: the invisible girl

Girls face particular disadvantages due to discrimination and practices which allocate to them forms of work which are largely hidden and unvalued.

Many girls take on unpaid household work for their families, usually more than boys. This work may include childcare, cooking, cleaning, and fetching water and fuel. Girls often have to combine long hours of chores with some form of economic activity outside the household. This “double burden” has a negative impact on any opportunity for school attendance and can actually present a physical danger to girls.

A major sector of employment for young girls is domestic work in third-party households. This form of child labour is mostly hidden from the public eye, and thus entails strong potential for exploitation and abuse. It is often accompanied by harsh working conditions and deprivation of rights. Post-primary age girls in rural areas are particularly vulnerable.

Overcoming inequalities in access

In 2000 the international community established the Millennium Development Goals. These include targets that by 2015 all children should be able to go to primary school, and gender disparity should be eliminated from both primary and secondary education.

The EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2009 states that of 75 million primary aged children still not enrolled in school, 55% are girls. At the current rate of progress, 29 million children will remain out of school by 2015. Other Education For All goals also lag behind, in particular early childhood and adult literacy. Poor children are heavily over-represented among the out-of-school numbers.

Gross enrolment at secondary level in developing countries stands at 61% for boys and 57% for girls. In the least developed countries, the figures are 32% for boys and 26% for girls. Clearly, across the world, huge numbers of girls simply cannot get access to education at post-primary level.

Gender inequality in education are also reflected in the high proportion of women among the world’s

Give girls a chance: End child labour
Of the 776 million adults who cannot read or write, two thirds are women – about 16% of the global adult population.

**Overcoming inequalities in service provision**

Teachers in poor, rural and indigenous areas face impossibly high class sizes and severe shortages of learning resources compared to their urban colleagues. The recruitment of para-teachers or contract teachers to reach marginalized groups and remote areas often negatively affects the quality of education, and does little to redress these inequalities.

Once past the classroom doors, the obstacles girls face, both cultural and social, are still enormous: Poor quality education, with untrained teachers and minimal resources; persistent gender discrimination and bias (including in teacher training); gender stereotypes in educational materials; and gender-insensitive learning environments.

**Gender inequality in education**

Girls are often the last to be enrolled in school and the first to be withdrawn from class if a family has to make a choice between educating a son or a daughter.

Girls are also more likely to be withdrawn from school in order to take on domestic and child rearing duties.

Lack of adequate water and sanitation facilities at school, along with a lack of relevant curricula sensitive to girls’ needs and aspirations are critical barriers for their education.

Distant schools and unsafe journeys to class make education a risk many families do not want their girls to take.

Without access to relevant quality education, girls go into the labour force at an early age, well below the minimum age of employment. It is therefore vital to extend secondary education and skills training for girls, and to ensure that children from poor and rural households have equal access to it. When they do, the results are positive for generations to come.

**Challenges for rural girls**

According to UNESCO, more than 80% of out of school children are in rural areas and 70% of child labour exists in rural areas. Education strategies focusing on rural areas are critically important.

Efforts to increase girls’ education must be accompanied by efforts to progressively eliminate less obvious forms of child labour, including excessive or inappropriate household chores which prevent children accessing or benefiting from education.

Girls and women play a critical role in rural economies: in crop production, livestock care, income generating activities both on and off the farm, as well as house maintenance and care giving. Women and girls contribute more than half of the labour required to produce the food
Eaten in developing countries, where agriculture is highly labour-intensive. In Africa, women and girls provide about three-quarters of the labour for food production. Education and training for girls can play an important role in boosting opportunities for girls above the minimum age of employment and contribute significantly to economic and social development.

Educating girls benefits the next generation

Research has proven that educating girls is one of the most effective ways to tackle poverty. Educated girls are more likely to have better income as adults, marry later, have fewer and healthier children, be less likely to contract HIV/AIDS, and to have decision-making power within the household.

They are also more likely to ensure that their own children are educated, helping to avoid future child labour. Tackling child labour among girls and promoting their right to education, is therefore an important element of broader strategies to promote democratic development and Decent Work.
No quick fix

Education is a crucial component of an effective strategy to eliminate child labour. Experience shows that a combination of economic growth, respect for labour standards, universal education and social protection, together with a better understanding of the needs and rights of children, can bring about a significant reduction in child labour. Compulsory school attendance up to the minimum age of employment (ILO Convention 138) is particularly important.

Child labour is a stubborn problem and responsibility to tackle the problem lies with all of us. Teachers have a special role to play, in the school and in the community, and with others in civil society.

Ending child labour and breaking the cycle of discrimination, poverty and violence requires the empowerment of girls. There is still a long journey ahead. But international human rights standards, agreed-upon commitments and targets all pave the way towards that goal.

EI and ILO working together to defend children’s rights

At the global level, remarkable progress has been made by linking Education for All to the elimination of child labour. The ILO, EI and other Global Union Federations have been working together to put child labour high up on the national and international agendas.
EI has also been active as a member of the inter-agency Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All, established in 2005, and works in close cooperation with the ILO's International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

EI also continues to be an active member of Global March Against Child Labour, a significant movement that has brought together teacher and other trade unions with non-governmental organizations to form a powerful civil society voice calling for education for all, eradication of poverty, and an end to child labour.

EI-affiliated organisations and their members, especially teachers in the field, have an important role to play in achieving Education for All (EFA), including getting all girls into school.

EI’s policy on child labour is guided by its commitment to promoting labour rights in the workplace and the human rights of children, especially the right to education. EI and its member organisations, representing 30 million teachers and education workers around the world, are working in coalitions to show the relevance of education in preventing and eliminating child labour and to highlight how teacher unions are responding to the problem.

EI is encouraging its members to organise awareness raising activities around the World Day against Child Labour (WDACL) on 12 June and/or the Day of the African Child on 16 June.

The ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) incorporates a wide range of work against child labour, including research and statistics, technical co-operation, a monitoring and evaluation unit, advisory services and advocacy, and an education unit.

EI and ILO/IPEC are cooperating at many levels to take forward the common vision of a world without child labour, one in which all children have a quality education.

How can we work together to end child labour?

In order to bring an end to child labour, and move children from work places to classrooms, the ILO Conventions on the employment of girls and boys must be respected and effectively enforced, and the objectives of Education for All must be met. Free, compulsory, quality education is essential.

Here are some fundamental steps that teacher organisations can undertake towards a world free of child labour.

Include child labour in your policy agenda, and make it an issue in the Education For All strategies and education reforms:

- Campaign for adequate resources (at least 6% of GDP) to allow for an expansion of public education, including quality early childhood services, schools, transitional and special education and vocational training to ensure access to education for all;

Give girls a chance: End child labour
• Advocate for investment in public infrastructure and quality public services, with an emphasis in rural areas, including transport, schools meals and sanitation in schools.

• Promote access for girls and boys, especially the most vulnerable, to education, skills development and vocational training.

• Make sure that national education plans include provisions meeting the concerns of working children.

• Review school curricula, educational and training materials, and teacher training programmes to promote gender-sensitive education so that girls and boys alike have an equal chance to benefit from education.

• Develop age-appropriate curriculum materials to be used in schools in both industrialised and developing countries that address the issues of child labour for students who are in danger of becoming child labourers and for those who are consumers of products made by child labour.

• Advocate for improved access to free, quality childcare and early childhood education, in order to ease the pressure on parents and help children get a good start in life-long education.

• Advocate for improved training, status and working conditions for teachers and support staff.

Mobilise members to become active:

• Discuss child labour within your union at the national and local level.

• Organise trainings on how union members can help in providing information on child labour.

• Review how your union is engaged with the EFA process in your country, in order to bring children into accessible quality schools. It is important that teacher unions have a voice in this process.

Organise capacity-building events for teachers and care givers to enable them to respond to challenges:

• Identify vulnerable children, assess and meet their needs.

• Create a gender-sensitive environment, free from stigma, discrimination and abuse.

• Encourage and support girls’ and boys’ interests in becoming literate, learning maths and acquiring skills for life.

• Promote the girls’ right to education with parents and the community and teach girls to be aware of their rights.

• Provide the necessary psycho-social support measures to prepare students for further training and employment.
It is clear that the global economic crisis is pushing more families into poverty and threatens to derail positive progress which has been made in extending access to education and tackling child labour.

Build the union, coalitions, and create networks to initiate cooperation against child labour:

- Organise to include all teachers and education workers.
- Work with other local unions, particularly in rural and disadvantaged areas.
- If your union is affiliated to a national trade union centre, work with the confederation to promote the World Day Against Child Labour every year on 12 June.
- Contact the ILO or IPEC (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour) office in your country in order to initiate joint activities.
- Lobby the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and other stakeholders, addressing action orientated measures with emphasis on girls.
- Consider calling for a special Education For All event to discuss how the EFA process can help tackle child labour.

Organise activities, campaigns and events around the World Day Against Child Labour on 12 June:

- Create public attention for the World Day Against Child Labour by issuing a press release or writing an article in your union’s magazine.
- If child labour is not a major problem in your country, start a discussion on steps that can be taken in your country to support those tackling child labour and promoting the education of girls and boys in other places of the world.

Take Action Together:

- Promote community involvement and partnerships that strengthen school communities.
- Promote and organise civic education initiatives at all levels of society to promote respect for children’s rights and empowerment of girls to break the cycle of discrimination.
- Support awareness-raising campaigns for birth registration, without which it is impossible to establish whether a child is old enough to attend school or to work.
- Intensify the campaign to end illiteracy among girls and women.

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The World Day Against Child Labour aims to promote awareness and action to tackle child labour. Support has been growing each year. In 2009, we hope that teachers unions and their members across the World will become involved in this international campaign.

On World Day Against Child Labour 2009 we call for:

For more information:

Education International’s Human and Trade Union Rights Equality Unit
info@ei-ie.org
• Policy responses to address the causes of child labour, paying particular attention to the situation of girls

• Urgent action to tackle the worst forms of child labour

• Greater attention to the education and skills training needs of adolescent girls

• Targeted measures to protect poor families from the impact of the economic crisis

The ILO’s International Program for the Elimination of Child Labour

ipec@ilo.org

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International laws and agreements on child labour and rights of girls and women

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948)**

Governments are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil all rights for children, youth and adults by ensuring that all barriers to those rights are removed.

http://www.ohchr.org/

**Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989)**

Governments must recognize children’s right to be protected from “any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education” (Article 32) and their right, on an equal, non-discriminatory basis, to “primary education compulsory and available free to all.” (Article 28)

http://www2.ohchr.org/

**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979)**

Governments must take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education, including in terms of vocational training, curricula, scholarships, literacy and family planning education. (Article 10)

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/

**Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

**Strategic Objective: The Girl Child**

- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child.
- Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls.
- Promote and protect the rights of the girl child and increase awareness of her needs and potential.
- Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training.
- Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition.
- Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labour and protect young girls at work.
- Eradicate violence against the girl child.
- Promote the girl child’s awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life.
- Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl child.

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/

**The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work** declares the effective abolition of child labour as a social pillar of the global economy.

http://www.ilo.org/
ILO Minimum Age Convention, No. 138 (1973) set the standard for the minimum age for admission to employment as 15 years, or in special cases where economic and educational facilities are insufficiently developed, 14 years. Light work not harmful to the child or prejudicial to his or her attendance at school is permissible after age 13 (or 12 if minimum age is set at 14).
http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/

ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, No 182 (1999) aims at the worst forms of child labour, defined as all forms of slavery and similar practices; child prostitution and pornography; illicit activities (in particular the production and trafficking of drugs), children in debt bondage or trafficking, children in slavery, forced or compulsory labour, including forced recruitment for use in armed conflict; and work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. C182 complements C 138.
http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/

Millennium Developments Goals (MDGs, 2000)

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education by 2015.
http://www.unpd.org/mdg/

Education For All Goals (EFA, 2000) expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

1. Ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

2. Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;

3. Achieve a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;

4. Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;

5. Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.
http://portal.unesco.org/education/
Education is a crucial component of an effective strategy to eliminate child labour. Experience shows that a combination of economic growth, respect for labour standards, universal education and social protection, together with a better understanding of the needs and rights of children, can bring about a significant reduction in child labour.

EI and ILO/IPEC are cooperating at many levels to take forward the common vision of a world without child labour, one in which all children have a quality education.

The ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is the world’s largest technical co-operation programme on child labour. Its aim is the progressive elimination of child labour world-wide, with the eradication of the worst forms an urgent priority.

ILO-IPEC, 4 Route des Morillons
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http://www.ilo.org/childlabour
ipec@ilo.org

Education International (EI) is a Global Union federation (GUF) representing nearly 30 million teachers and other education workers, through 401 member organizations in 172 countries and territories. EI’s work to end child labour is a key aspect of its human rights campaign and its Education For All campaign.

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12 June | World Day Against Child Labour